



## AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Without prejudice, please amend the claims as reflected in the following listing of claims, which will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

### Listing of Claims:

1. (Original) An apparatus for tightening a cord, the apparatus comprising:
  - a) a body; and
  - b) a grabber extending from the body and defining a groove therebetween configured to grip the cord therein.
2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the body has a shape configured to be manually grippable.
3. (Original) The apparatus of claim 2 wherein the body has a generally cylindrical shape.
4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 2 wherein the body has a length at least as great as a width of an intended user's hand.
5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 4 wherein the body has a length of at least one-half decimeter.
6. (Original) The apparatus of claim 4 wherein the body has a length of at least one decimeter.
7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 2 wherein the body has a width of at least one centimeter.
8. (Original) The apparatus of claim 2 wherein the body has a width of at least two centimeters.
9. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the grabber is generally tongue-shaped.

10. (Original) The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the grabber extends generally circumferentially and radially outwardly from an outer surface of the body at a central region thereof.
11. (Original) The apparatus of claim 10 wherein the grabber comprises a base portion at which the grabber merges with the body, and a tip portion narrower than the base portion.
12. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the body and the grabber are rigid.
13. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the body and the grabber are formed from a single mold.
14. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the body and the grabber comprise an inner core material.
15. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein the inner core material comprises a plastic.
16. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein the inner core material comprises a resin.
17. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein the body and the grabber further comprise an outer coating.
18. (Original) The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the outer coating comprises a resiliently deformable material.
19. (Original) The apparatus of claim 18 wherein the resiliently deformable material comprises rubber.
20. (Original) The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the outer coating comprises a material selected to provide a desired amount of friction between the outer coating and the cord.

21. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a plurality of teeth extending from at least one of the body and the grabber within the groove.
22. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the grabber is configured to grab the cord.
23. (Original) The apparatus of claim 22 wherein the grabber is insertable under the cord to grab the cord.
24. (Original) The apparatus of claim 22 wherein the grabber is generally tongue-shaped and comprises a tip portion insertable under the cord to grab the cord.
25. (Original) The apparatus of claim 22 wherein the body is rotatable about a central axis thereof to grip the cord in the groove.
26. (Original) The apparatus of claim 25 wherein the body is pullable in a direction non-parallel to the central axis of the body.
27. (Original) The apparatus of claim 26 wherein the body is pullable in a direction substantially perpendicular to the central axis of the body.
28. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the groove is configured to grip, as the cord, ~~comprises a lace portion extending between eyelets of a footwear item, and wherein the groove is configured to grip the lace portion therein.~~
29. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the groove is configured to grip, as the cord, ~~comprises a skatelace portion extending between eyelets of a skate, and wherein the groove is configured to grip the skatelace portion therein.~~
30. (Currently Amended) A system comprising first and second a pair of apparatuses, each of which comprises the apparatus of ~~as defined by~~ claim 1, the respective grooves of which are configured to grip first and second respective cord portions therein.

- 31.** (Currently Amended) A system comprising ~~first and second a pair of~~ apparatuses, each of which comprises the apparatus of ~~as defined by~~ claim **29**, the respective grooves of which are configured to grip first and second respective skatelace portions therein.
- 32.** (Original) A method of tightening a cord, the method comprising:
- gripping a cord in a groove defined between a grabber of a tightener and a body of the tightener; and
- pulling the tightener.
- 33.** (Original) The method of claim **32** wherein gripping comprises grabbing the cord.
- 34.** (Original) The method of claim **33** wherein grabbing comprises inserting the grabber under the cord.
- 35.** (Original) The method of claim **34** wherein gripping further comprises rotating the tightener about a central axis thereof to grip the cord in the groove.
- 36.** (Original) The method of claim **35** wherein pulling comprises pulling the tightener in a direction non-parallel to the central axis of the tightener.
- 37.** (Original) The method of claim **36** wherein pulling comprises pulling the tightener in a direction substantially perpendicular to the central axis of the tightener.
- 38.** (Original) The method of claim **32** wherein gripping a cord comprises gripping a lace portion extending between eyelets of a footwear item.
- 39.** (Original) The method of claim **38** wherein gripping a lace portion comprises gripping a skatelace portion extending between eyelets of a skate.

40. (Original) The method of claim 38 wherein gripping comprises gripping a first lace portion in a first groove defined between a grabber of a first tightener and a body of the first tightener, and gripping a second lace portion in a second groove defined between a grabber of a second tightener and a body of the second tightener, and wherein pulling comprises pulling the first and second tighteners.
41. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for tightening a cord, the apparatus comprising:
- a body;
  - means for grabbing the cord, the means for grabbing extending from the body; and
  - means for gripping the cord between the means for grabbing and the body.
42. (Original) The apparatus of claim 41 further comprising means for facilitating pulling of the body.